

From Leisure to Pleasure: The Future of Sexual Services in Hotels

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Since the beginning of recorded history, but especially from the expansion of the Roman Empire, rooms for travellers have been associated with the provision of sexual services (O’Gorman, 2010). The development of mass tourism and travel for leisure purposes as opposed to travel for religious, military or business purposes is a modern phenomenon (Turner & Ash, 1975). This growth in modern tourism was associated initially with the grand hotel, which offered its client’s luxury services, including sexual services and this is nothing new, as hotels have always been seen as places of sexual freedom (Pritchard & Morgan, 2006). Hotels have also been quick to adopt the merging technology of the day, such as: elevators, air conditioning, televisions, telephones, and today with wi-fi, ipad docks and adult movies. The development of new technology, such as the internet and social media has meant that hotel managers are increasing unaware of the many activities that take place in their hotel rooms, but what will happen in the future?

The future has always fascinated us, and as Khannia & Khannia (2011) reminds us, this area of academic debate started with Marinetti’s pioneering study of the future in 1909, but only became a serious topic for study with Toffler’s 1970’s publication, *Future Shock*. The study of the future development of robots is even more recent (Caroll, 2011, Juergen 2011, Levy, 2007) as are studies on the future of the hotel (Jones, 2006, Yeoman, 2008, Pearson 2011). However, what these theoretical/thinking studies lack is an understanding from those who work in the tourism sector, on what they believe maybe possible and likely in terms of future developments. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are: 1. To explore the likely timelines for the adaption of new technology in hotels, 2. To explore the development and use of service and sexual robots in hotels, 3. To understand hotel managers concerns about the use of robots in the hotel of the future. This paper does explore issues such as prostitution (Hall, 2002), love hotels (Alexander et al, 2010) or love in tourism (Singh, 2002), all of which have been studied by others.

Through two focus groups, with 18 hotel managers from three and four star hotels in two capital cities, the issue of the future use of the hotel room specifically for sexual activities was explored, along with the future development and use of both service and sexual pleasure robots. Based on the methodology developed by Watson (2008) for the extinction/adoption of new technology, the two groups were asked to agree on five-year time bands for the adoption of new technology, and the results were circulated twice to both groups before consensus was reached. The topics for discussion in the focus groups were drawn from studies of the future of tourism (Levy 2007, Warne 2008, Pearson 2011, Juergen 2011, Lyons 2011, Future Foundation 2011) as well as from the hotel managers themselves. They centered around the changing use of technology and their likely impacts on the provision of sexual services over two time periods: the near and to some extent the known future (the next ten years) and the far future (twenty years plus). The manager’s, discussed the changing nature of technology in the past; polaroid photos, adult magazines, DVD’s, but also explored issues raised in the near future, such as the development of voyeurism TV channels and life size holographic projections. The far future scenario explored the functions that robots may undertake, such as front desk, porter and bar tendering services, as well as more personal services, such a personal sexual pleasure robots.

As to the future function of hotels, managers foresaw the use of hotels shifting from functional activities such as for business or leisure purposes, to ‘sexual pleasure holidays’, where the purpose of the trip to a hotel, was for sexual pleasure. They also foresaw the provision of

segregated floors based on sexual preferences; just as today, we have smoking and no-smoking floors, in the future, we will have sexual and no-sexual pleasure floors. Other feasible developments included: the provision of sexual butlers, sexual concierge services and sexual stimulating drugs through room services. The managers also discussed a very wide range of issues, such as: the shifting power relationships between the genders, labor shortages, the personality of those who would work in such hotels, the provision by hotels of their own sexual robots, the development of fantasy sexual tourism village/towns, level of support from publically funded DMO's, the impact on existing brands and the development of new hotel groupings/brands, impact on a destination's image, development of new income streams for hotels and the rights of robots.

In terms of further research, the views of hotel guests as well as more senior managers, head office staff/owners and DMOs, especially publicly funded DMOs, needs to be explored. The perceptions and motivations of those developing such technology would also help the sector better understand the future use of technology. The moral and religious issues raised by the possible use of robots for sexual pleasure is also poorly understood, and needs further study, as does local resident's perceptions into the acceptability of such hotels and the feasibility of creating sexually focused destinations.

The study concluded that service robots will become more acceptable and common in the provision of hotels services, partly driven by labor shortages and once this happens, it will not be long before sexual pleasure robots will be acceptable. However, their acceptance and the future of sexual services provided by hotels will be determined, not by the hotel or the wants of their guests, but by wider societal norms. However, it maybe many years before you will be able to walk into a hotel with your own sexual pleasure robot, and even then, it maybe through a side door!

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